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ABSTRACT

Foreign language teachers have long recognized that the teaching of culture is an integral part of their teaching objectives. Cultural content can change rapidly within the target society, and the difficulties encountered in gathering and up-dating relevant materials are compounded by the elusiveness of the term "culture." Cultural understanding applies to both "formal" culture, that is, a knowledge of the concepts, skills, arts and institutions of a given people at a given time and "deep" culture in the anthropological sense of the word, that is, the "knowledge of a country and society" and the formation of positive attitudes toward the foreign peoples that help to break down cultural barriers and prejudices. Cultural content should be pervasive throughout language teaching and be presented in the following teaching models: daily cultural asides or slice-of-life techniques, weekly culture capsules or periodic culture clusters. The foreign language classroom should become a "cultural island" approximating the setting of the target culture. Recent research emphasizes the importance of cultural understanding in the learning of a language and in forming tolerant and appreciative attitudes towards people who exhibit different cultural patterns from those of our own. (Author/CFM)

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"Methods for Bringing Culture into the Classroom"

When the Polish-American interpreter accompanying our President on his mission abroad told the Polish audience that the leader of our country had "abandoned" his own people in "lust" for his hosts the initial shock of a stunned public slowly gave way to the acceptance of a humorous slip in translating. The "Warsaw incident" points very directly to the important relationship between language acquisition and the cultural understanding of the contemporary society which speaks that language.

Every teacher knows that he or she must teach culture in the foreign language classes, but the term "culture" is so elusive on one hand and so all inclusive on the other, that, although we are convinced of its impact on our students, its component objectives are difficult to spell out.

When our graduate students, many of whom are foreign language teachers in Orange County public schools, first came to me with the request that our department introduce a seminar in "Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom" I was enthusiastically supportive for a moment until I realized that there was this mass of undefined and undefinable bits and pieces of information swirling around in my head and I felt like the Austrian Consul General in Los Angeles who, when asked to speak on Austrian Culture during a workshop in Long Beach, said: "Kultur, darüber kann man nicht sprechen, denn das Thema hat keinen Anfang und kein Ende" (loosely translated: Culture, you can't possibly talk about it, because the topic has neither a beginning nor an end). Then he proceeded to talk about it for one and a half hours and barely scratched the surface. Well, I prepared a semester's seminar and barely made a dent in the vast expanse generally referred to as culture.

One of the difficulties in discussing this topic is the definition of the

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meaning of the word itself rather than the gathering of information. Culture means many different things to different people. The word is unfortunately quite ambiguous in English. "Culture," derived from Latin "cultura" whose original meaning was "cultivation of soil and the raising of plants and animals," has become considerably more abstract in its modern meaning. We distinguish the following three meanings of the word:

1. Improvement or development of self through study and training.
2. Refining and training of mind, manners and taste.
3. Concepts, skills, arts, institutions of a given people in a given time.[1]

Definitions one and two point to an elitist interpretation. A person qualified under one and two above certainly has the right, even the obligation to call himself "a cultured person." The futility of any attempt to achieve these goals in our language classes single-handedly, when elaborate school systems have failed in it, is apparent. It is definition three in its anthropological comprehensiveness that is of special interest to us. Defining and interpreting the word is an exciting intellectual exercise, to be sure, but will leave the question unanswered as to what to do with it in the classroom. It is interesting to observe that definitions one and two are actually in contrast to that of number three. One and two would seem to relate to experiencing the best which a society has produced in the realm of music, literature, theater, dance, art, history, politics, architecture and more. This is the part of culture alternately described as "culture in the liberal arts sense of the word"[2] "big C Culture"[3] and as "formal culture,"[4] a term perhaps better suited than the others and coined by Nelson Brooks.

Definition three in contrast to the above seems to address itself to the

sum, the total of achievements including the lifestyle, behavior patterns and all aspects of society.

It is this sum of achievements of a given society showing the human being in his daily routines, his joys and his sorrows, the totality of his experiences, which is of interest to the foreign language teacher as well as to the anthropologist. Linguists who deal with semantics are quick to point out that the sum of achievement by necessity of meaning must contradict the inclusion of the best a society has produced, since the concept of best "implies that a great deal of the sum has been eliminated."[5] For the purpose of language teaching and creating a cultural framework for the target society let it suffice to say that the sum of achievements of a given society includes the best. It is unfortunate that English, so rich in lexemes, did not produce a different word to indicate the sum of attainments of a society, which now we alternately refer to as "culture in the anthropological sense of the word," "small c culture," or "deep culture."[6] German, for instance, has a word describing the sum of achievements which is called "Landeskunde" or loosely translated: "knowledge of a country and society."

Obviously "big C Culture" or "formal culture" as I will refer to it from now on may be taught "as an end in itself"[7] in so-called culture and civilization courses. Although inherently interesting in its own right material of this type, according to Chastain, "may not contribute significantly to the students' ability to function linguistically and socially in the contemporary culture nor to their intercultural understanding."[8] These courses are usually offered as advanced university lectures, their intellectual levels of form and content difficult enough that it would exclude a large number of the ordinary people in

the target society. Outlines, information and textbooks for such courses are easily obtainable and the instructor's research will certainly include such topics as Nelson Brooks lists under his definition of "formal culture:"

> literary landmarks (perhaps it should be pointed out that it would be desirable for introductory courses to literature to be structured in such a manner that the literary works would be viewed as sources and reflections of the cultural background of a society, rather than as sources for literary and form analyses, especially in light of the Single Subject Credential Examination for the State of California: 60% language skills, 30% culture and civilization and 10% formal linguistics), historical landmarks, museums, music, art, dance, holidays (official), national shrines and monuments, formal religion and worship, schools and education, business, industry and finance, military organization, diplomatic and civil service, organized politics, lawmaking and judicial systems, national sports, medicine and science, geography and climate, pollution and environment and many more.[9]

It hardly needs to be mentioned that we want to include as much of the above information as our schedules will allow in our language instruction, since some basic knowledge of such facts is necessary to understand contemporary society. "For the language learner, no full understanding of meaning is possible without an extensive analysis of what is referred to by both the formal and the deep culture."[10]

It is deep culture, however, which remains more difficult to organize and to categorize in such a way that we can include it in ordered sequences in our

lesson plans. If we agree on the two main objectives for language learning, namely "communication" and "cross-cultural understanding," both of which include a reasonable facility in the target language, we will also agree with Chastain, in all but very specialized cases, that the "principal reason for foreign language teaching is not only the linguistic acquisition of the target language, but also the acquisition of a positive attitude towards another culture."[11] It is unfortunate but true, that in most cases after a limited, often quite short exposure to the language the only thing which remains permanently with our students is the attitude which we were able to shape towards the people in the target society.

If we follow a step-by-step procedure in trying to answer the question "what makes a person a member of a particular society" the first objective will have to be to break down the cultural barriers which have developed in our primarily monocultural society. For this purpose we might seek to stress the similarities between the native and the target cultures, keeping in mind that our task is one of acquainting rather than indoctrinating since the ethnocentrism of our students might easily trigger antagonism towards another culture. I am sure that you have been able to observe that students while willing to accept different behavior patterns of another society often become defensive when these patterns are glorified and portrayed as "better" and "superior" to our own.

Most of our students have formed in their minds a certain picture of the society and its members. These pictures often represent the stereotype of the target culture which were acquired through typical depiction in films, TV programs, magazines, newspapers or through conversations about the people. In a recent column in the Los Angeles Times Jack Smith wrote, in jest to be sure,

after relating a conversation between Albert Einstein who was teaching at Cal Tech and a radio personality: "I have never tried to make apologies for botching German. To me, the language is impenetrable. I have never understood how it could be worked into poetry and song. It seems to be very serviceable for making war, but I cannot imagine making love in it, and have always suspected that German lovers never talk. One sentence would spoil everything. German phrases of endearment sound to my ear like entrees on a delicatessen menu. As Mark Twain said of the language: 'Whenever the literary German dives into a sentence, that is the last you are going to see of him till he emerges on the other side of his Atlantic with his verb in his mouth'."[12]

Although written in jest there is no doubt that we have to work overtime to overcome prejudiced opinions like these. Deep culture in a constant barrage during our language classes will most likely achieve this goal as well as anything. Its objectives strive to acquaint the student with large and small details of everyday life in the target society. The list is endless and I will attempt to enumerate only some of them: greetings and leave-taking, requirements of politeness including formal and intimate forms of address, interjections, names, family ties and relationships, friendship and dating, personal milestones: birthdays, graduation, weddings, funerals, etc., daily routines at home, at work, in school, foods, both eaten at home and in restaurants, proving one's masculinity, one's femininity, the role of women in society, childhood, adulthood, parenthood, old age, kindness and cruelty, humor, paralinguistic demonstrations such as gestures of emotions, courtesy and rudeness, careers and training, clothes, educational systems, delinquency and drugs. This list is limited only by your imagination and the ability to find recent information.

It is the problem of recent information which I would like to address briefly. Since every society is in constant change the problem of cultural content is critical for most foreign language teachers. How does a generalist keep up with rapid changes in the target culture, when that is difficult enough for individuals who are area specialists? The answer again is pretty much left to the inventiveness, resourcefulness, persistence and imagination of the individual teachers. Some seem to have sources which never dry up, some never seem to be able to keep up. If you are type two try to cultivate the friendship of type one above. More seriously, here are some quite obvious ways to refresh one's cultural content:

1. Extended stays periodically in the target countries by ways of private means, scholarships and stipends, teacher exchange programs, and study abroad programs by local universities.
2. Visitors from abroad including friends, acquaintances, exchange students to our campuses or communities, business people, consular employees and airline personnel, who can function as guest speakers and resource informants on recent developments in their countries.
3. Recent films and tape programs including video-taped TV programs.
4. Journals, newspapers and magazines, both foreign and domestic and recently published books.
5. Realia, any kind of materials we can manage to collect or have collected for us. A recent menu from a restaurant may give us some idea of what inflation has done to restaurant food prices, etc.

Much outdated and obsolete information given to our students by well-meaning,

but uninformed teachers and ridiculously invalid statements in textbooks bear vivid witness to the lack of contemporary cultural content.

In disseminating deep culture Lado distinguishes two stages: the early stage of inadequate control of the target language when "one attempts to clarify specific cultural items and patterns as they occur in learning the basic structure of the language."[13] Obviously this stage would necessitate the use of the native language when the facility in the target language is not sufficient to present cultural items of interest to the students. The later stage would teach cultural content "through the target language in systematic and more comprehensive assignments."[14] Before we involve ourselves with linguistic patterns Lado suggests as one of the first activities in the foreign language class that we "set the stage"[15] by beginning with a film, with pictures, slides, music or geography, something which will forcefully make students sense that they are entering another culture and are not only learning to make strange sounds. We might want to sketch the history of the people whose language we are about to learn and devise activities which will provide answers to questions like: Who are they? Where are they located? What are their outstanding achievements? How and when did they influence our own culture? How is the new language related to our own? As the students what they know about the country and its people. The answers might focus on stereotypes at the outset.

The teaching of culture takes on many varied forms within the framework of our lesson plans. There are the self-contained culture, civilization and literature classes mentioned above as well as the informal cultural units within a language class. Such units may be planned as daily activities and be presented as so-called cultural asides or slice-of-life techniques lasting perhaps only 2-5

minutes and may include any brief information: how to introduce a friend, when to shake hands, a report of a flood in the target country or the visit of a dignitary.

Weekly topics requiring longer periods might include a film or slide presentation, records, reports, short geographical, social or political segments. Such weekly activities, also referred to as culture capsules may take anywhere from 10-30 minutes.

Periodic culture clusters are assigned a longer time span, perhaps one to two periods and may take the form of skits, longer films plus discussion, song and dance presentations, presentations of student projects, creating special bulletin boards, projects with community participation and interdisciplinary units. It is important to integrate all cultural activities as a valid and important activity in achieving our objectives.

Oliva views the foreign language classroom as a "cultural island"[16] which should approximate the foreign setting as closely as possible.

In bringing cultural content to the classroom as in all other aspects of the educational process the qualified and skilled teacher with up-to-date information is the single most important element. Next the foreign language textbook should lend itself easily to provide materials for cultural asides, culture capsules and should contain activities for culture clusters. The information must be authentic, current and geared to the maturity level and the interest of the students it addresses. The checklist for the textbook ought to include questions pertaining to: genuinely authentic situations, natural and appropriate language in native colloquial patterns, lack of stereotypes and demonstration of current developments in inter-family relationships.

M. Tussing's research on the role of the female and feminine forms in textbooks points out that most texts do not accurately reflect the role of women in German society and that feminine forms are hit and miss at best.[17] Pictures which are contained in a text should not only present a romanticized view of society, vocabulary should reflect today's modern speech and all countries where the target language is spoken should be represented. In a recent article Pfister and Borzilleri examined five beginning German texts with a checklist for cultural concepts and found that all five widely circulating textbooks were inadequate as to their cultural content.[18]

The "cultural island" classroom should be well adorned with posters and maps. Maps must reflect the most recent political changes often influencing boundaries. Design activities which bring the students to the map frequently, so that they can become familiar with the geographical realities of the target country. Posters, although colorful and decorative often have the disadvantage of being romantically unrealistic thus reinforcing stereotypes which we are trying to lay to rest. From frequently displayed posters one might easily get the impression that the Spaniards are all bullfighters, that all of France is a Gothic cathedral or a Chateau au Loire and that all Germans live in a fairytale castle built by mad King Ludwig. The trend here fortunately is towards a more realistic variety of posters.

Slides, filmstrips and films, although excellent visual materials, all too often give us views of a society depicting the unusual, the atypical, especially true of films made for the natives, whereas the student of the culture needs to be "exposed to the typical, the usual"[19] with a central cultural meaning. Films made for the learner of a language by skilled pedagogically trained filmmakers

are therefore more desirable. I always include a session in my culture seminar dealing with the production of slides from printed pictures, so that the teacher can create slide shows from current magazines and books showing problems of pollution and environment, political demonstrations of students, public transportation, environmental problems, etc. In a massive attempt to supply German programs with relevant information Inter Nationes, an organization sponsored by the German government has supplied us with slide-tape programs on current topics dealing with modern Germany. Slides, in addition to providing visual impressions, are also easily adaptable for conversation stimuli. Before viewing a film or slides we might want to provide our students with a checklist of items or questions to be observed while watching the film, such as: how do the actors address each other, what do they wear for what occasion, what are the traffic patterns and the modes of transportation, look at the houses and housing, observe the tone of voice and their gestures, can you observe current prices of food, of shoes, etc., what are the interrelationships of friends, of family members?

Radio and TV programs whether aired locally or available by short wave programs or videotaped by friends or information agencies underline the concept that the language we teach is alive and spoken by real people. Local programs perhaps need to carry some warning since students must understand that many are geared to often faded and romanticized memories of immigrants.

Newspapers, magazines and journals, both in the target language and the native tongue are excellent sources for current event units, even if the publications have been delayed in the mails by days or weeks. Illustrated magazines lend themselves well to short reports by students on topics of pollution, crime,

attitudes toward love and sex, fashions, women in the news, politics, labor and social problems. Local newspapers with foreign desks provide a wealth of information and the language teacher ought to read his or her daily paper with a pair of scissors by his or her side. During a recent ten day period my file of clippings from the Los Angeles Times grew by fourteen articles on Spanish speaking countries, four on France and eight on Germany, East and West, two on Switzerland, and one on Lichtenstein.

The community presents a resource which is not tapped very often in the form of visitors, recently arrived immigrants, exchange students and teachers, government and business representatives as well as specialists in nearby universities. Many of these people will respond with enthusiasm to our invitations. Discuss such visits with your students and let their interests determine the topics of lectures and discussions, have students prepare pertinent questions in advance so that you can control the direction of the discussion.

Interdisciplinary units with departments of social studies, art, music, mathematics, home economics and even physical education need substantial planning and cooperation but are rewarding activities. While the academic programs might share films, slides, reports and lectures on topics of history, politics, geography, the metric system, art and art history, music and religion, your realia collection might guide you in preparing activities of a more concretely practical nature. Subway maps and timetables may be the basis of planning a trip from one city to another providing information on when and where to depart, the cost of the trip, what kind of a train to take, how long the trip will take, etc. Advertisements and restaurant menus may provide an insight into eating habits and the cost for feeding yourself or a family. A local junior high

school teacher has students actually prepare French and German dinners in the home economics department of her school after studying receipes with her students, converting the metric measures into our own, learning names for ingredients and studying directions and finally inviting parents and friends for the feast. Another teacher prepared a unit on soccer including vocabulary, history, rules and techniques and presented it to a high school physical education department. He not only increased the German enrollment, but the school now has a soccer team. One more activity involved the industrial arts department where students made jigsaw puzzles of different maps of Germany. While students enjoyed their hobbies they learned geography.

In addition to your own collection of materials there is a number of commercial suppliers of realia, books, magazines and audio-visual materials. All of them will send you their free catalogs.

Let me conclude by reiterating the importance of bringing cultural content into our foreign language classrooms. Long after our students will have forgotten strong and weak adjective endings, or the difference between the meaning of the preterite and the imperfect, or the intricacies of the passé composé, they will remember details of life in Germany, in Spain or in France. Most importantly, however, their monocultural orientation will have been changed to a multicultural outlook making them more receptive and more tolerant of our neighbors in an ever shrinking world. Social scientists agree with the language teachers that our own national ideals of individual self-fulfillment in a meaningful society rests on the understanding of a number of diverse societies and that some "delimitable experience of a second culture is essential for a modern education."[20]

The most recent edition of the Chronicle of Higher Education reports that Harvard University in reexamining their General Education Requirements has listed foreign language and the study of foreign cultures in the target languages as one of five essential areas[21] for survival of educated people in the last quarter of the 20th century. Even business, until quite recently satisfied to let foreign nationals do the work and the consulting in the target language seems to be changing its attitude. In a recent article entitled "The Demand for German in International Business" John Grandin asked the following question of 129 responding multinational companies: "Would a background knowledge of German Culture, i.e., history, art theatre, customs, daily life be valuable for members of your company? to which 71 answered "Yes" and 53 "No."[22]

If we succeed in transmitting cultural knowledge of their own and other societies and cultural adaptability to our students perhaps we will have a lasting part in reducing their culture shock when they encounter another society with different values, as surely they will during their lives, and perhaps we will have no small part in making future generations tolerant and even appreciative of different cultures.

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Footnotes:

[1] Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1976.

[2] Nostrand, Howard Lee. Foreign Language Teaching. An Anthology. (Joseph Michel, Editor) New York: MacMillan Company, 1967 (123).

[3] Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools. Sacramento: State Department of Education, 1972.

[4] Brooks, Nelson. Language Instruction. Teacher's Notebook. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966 (4).

[5] ibid. (2).

[6] Nostrand, Framework, Brooks.

[7] Brooks (4).

[8] Chastain, Kenneth. Developing Second-Language Skills. Chicago: Rand McNally Publishing Company, 1976 (388).

[9] Brooks, (4).

[10] ibid. (4).

[11] Chastain, (383).

[12] Smith, Jack. "Rapped by a Sour Kraut." Los Angeles Times, Feb. 28, 1973.

[13] Lado, Robert. Language Teaching. A Scientific Approach. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1964 (31).

[14] ibid. (31).

[15] ibid. (152).

[16] Oliva, Peter F. The Teaching of Foreign Languages. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969. (164).

[17] Tussing, Marjorie. "Female Stereotypes in Textbooks," research paper submitted for publication.

[18] Pfister, Guenter and Borziller, Petra. "Surface Cultural Concepts: A Design for the Evaluation of Cultural Materials in Textbooks." Unterrichspraxis X, No.2 (1977), 102-108.

[19] Lado (31).

[20] Nostrand (123).

[21] Chronicle of Higher Education. March 6, 1978.

[22] Grandin, John. "The Demand for German in International Business." Unterrichtspraxis X, No.2 (1977), 32-38.